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SUBJECT: SLOVAKIA PREPARES TO ABOLISH EXTREMIST POLITICAL PARTY

Classified By: Charge d'Affaires A.I. Lawrence R. Silverman for Reasons 1.5 (B) and (D).

1. (C) SUMMARY AND COMMENT: Slovakia is struggling to come to terms with its diversity and diminish the influence of racist extremist groups. A recent meeting with the Interior Ministry's chief coordinator of the anti-extremism unit revealed that the government allowed extremist group Slovenska Pospolitost (an archaic term that translates roughly as "Slovak Community") to register as a political party, which allowed the MOI to collect detailed information on the group's finances, membership, and activities, and prepare for legal action against them. The issue of hate speech and extremist groups in Slovakia, as it frequently does elsewhere, has to walk the line between protecting freedom of expression and protecting the safety of minority groups. END SUMMARY AND COMMENT.

MOI TRIES TO CATCH FLIES WITH HONEY

2. (C) Poloffs met with Pavol Draxler, the chief coordinator of the anti-extremism unit at the Ministry of the Interior (MOI). Draxler briefed us on the status of extremist political party Slovenska Pospolitost (an archaic term that translates roughly as "Slovak Community"), a nationalist group whose members frequently wear the black uniforms of the wartime Slovak Republic's "Hlinka Guards," who participated in the deportation of Slovak Jews to Germany during World War II. Draxler said that the MOI decided to allow the group to register as a political party in January 2005 in order to help the government collect information about the group's leadership, finances, and location around Slovakia. On the other hand, this legitimacy has allowed Pospolitost to use its legal status to continue promoting its extremist and nationalist agenda in public demonstrations. While such demonstrations are closely monitored by the police, in the past three months Pospolitost has organized marches in Revuca and in Komarno, both of which were directed against the ethnic Hungarian minority in those towns. Wearing their trademark black uniforms, Slovenska Pospolitost scuffled with Hungarian residents in Komarno until the police intervened.

3. (SBU) Pospolitost, however, is not just anti-Hungarian. In response to criticism from Slovakia's Jewish community, Pospolitost used its website (<http://www.pospolitost.sk>) to condemn of Slovak Jews (especially those living in Komarno). Members of the Union of Jewish Communities in Slovakia (UNZZO) want to schedule a meeting with the Minister of the Interior to request that Pospolitost's legal status as a political party be revoked. The NGO People Against Racism, and the Civic Conservative Party have already filed similar requests.

4. (C) While Draxler would not discuss specifics, he said the police are currently preparing a major "action" against Pospolitost. Using evidence gathered from these raids, the Ministry will then ask the General Prosecutor and the courts to abolish the party, and to begin prosecuting its leaders. According to Draxler, the MOI plan to allow the group to register and act freely has worked, as the MOI has now collected sufficient information and evidence on criminal activities of the leaders. The police now have detailed knowledge of Pospolitost supporters and leaders in Slovakia, and Draxler showed us a map of Slovakia which indicated the group's "strength" and support in different cities and regions. In general, the largest support for Pospolitost is in areas where in 1930's "Rodobrana", a fascist paramilitary corps, had been formed; particularly in Western Slovakia around Senica, Myjava, Hlohovec, Piestany, Trnava and Nitra.

THE MEN BEHIND POSPOLITOST

5. (C) The leader of Slovenska Pospolitost, Marian Kotleba, is currently a teacher at a university in Banska Bystrica, and his deputy works in the Trnava Nuclear Research Institute. The organization boasts about 2,500 supporters/members, and has international ties to other extremist groups, mainly "Obraz" in Russia and Serbia, and

"Noua Dreapta" in Romania. Draxler said it's much easier to get information about Pospolitost than on the rest of the extremist scene in Slovakia, which is mostly made up of skinhead groups. The skinheads are usually divided into small, flexible, dynamic groups, usually consisting of a leader and several young followers.

THE EXTREMIST SCENE IN SLOVAKIA

16. (SBU) Extremist movements in Slovakia involve around 4,500 people. Compared with the past, Draxler feels that this is an improvement. He noted that in 1996-1997,

extremist groups committed several murders, mostly of members of the Roma minority. In 2001, the MOI prepared a strategy for the elimination of extremist crime. In 2002, Minister of Interior Vladimir Palko established a central coordination committee for fighting extremism, in which all bodies dealing with extremism - including investigators, prosecutors, detectives, and regular "beat cops" - participate. In addition, the prosecution and Ministry of Justice participate in the working group, and the MOI has established two anti-extremism specialist positions in each of the eight regional police headquarters.

17. (SBU) Until 2002, the police only seldom identified a crime as racially motivated or with extremist background. In 2002, MOI approved a new methodology for identification of "extremist crimes," and issued training materials for regional coordinators. In the wake of this training, the number of identified extremist crimes rose from 40 in 2001 to 109 in 2002. The number peaked at 119 in 2003 before tapering off to 79 in 2004, 57 of which were successfully prosecuted by the police. In the first half of 2005, there were 29 cases, 18 successfully prosecuted by the police. (Note: More data is available at www.minv.sk/extremizmus).

18. (C) After successful raids by the police in Malacky (Dec 2004) and Dolny Kubin, the extreme scene is quieter and less active in Slovakia. In Malacky, about 200 participants from Slovakia, the Czech Republic, Hungary, and Finland participated; police interrogated 80 persons, and 7 were accused of a crime. Draxler said that as a result, Slovakia is no longer perceived as a safe haven for extremists, and that even certain Slovak extremist leaders prefer to stay in the Czech Republic.

EXTREMISTS WORK WITH THEIR AMERICAN COUSINS...

19. (C) Draxler said that many of Slovakia's skinhead and Pospolitost extremists receive their training in the United States from radical Christian and racial hate groups. Many of the inflammatory internet postings are housed on American servers where they receive stronger free speech protection than Slovak web hosts. Draxler said he believed that better cooperation between units responsible for extremism and internet providers would be useful.

...BUT POLICE HAVE TROUBLE COOPERATING

10. (C) Draxler lamented that international police cooperation within the EU is weak. He said that cooperation is somewhat better in the Visegrad countries, and mainly between Slovakia and the Czech Republic. The Slovak MOI is therefore organizing an EU meeting to discuss cooperation in the fight against extremism. However, as an illustration of how poor the cooperation is, Draxler told us of a German citizen who resided for quite a long time in Banska Bystrica, where he was printing materials with extremist content and sending them to Western Europe. The Slovak police could not do anything about it, as he was not doing anything illegal in Slovakia, and the cooperation necessary to pursue an international warrant with the involved EU countries simply did not exist. Despite this lack of communication, Draxler believes the anti-extremism unit and the system is working well now in Slovakia.

DRAXLER ASKED TO CONSIDER ANTI-TRAFFICKING POST

11. (C) BIO NOTES: The young and clean-cut Draxler, who originally hails from the NGO community, was recently asked by the Minister of the Interior to consider applying for the position of National Coordinator for Slovakia's new anti-trafficking group (a position widely expected to be filled by current anti-trafficking unit chief Anna Babincova). Draxler said he told the Minister that he preferred to continue his work against extremist groups, a more cloak-and-dagger role that draws less spotlight - something the generally shy Draxler may have found unappealing about the anti-trafficking position.

SILVERMAN

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